



KYODO (/author /kyodo)

# East Timor launches UN campaign to pressure Australia to agree permanent maritime borders

East Timor believes that if boundaries were decided under the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, most of the rich oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea would lie within its territory.

PUBLISHED : Monday, 11 April, 2016, 6:36pm  
UPDATED : Monday, 11 April, 2016, 6:41pm



East Timor on Monday took its quest for permanent maritime boundaries with Australia to the United Nations, with the aim of forcing its giant neighbour to negotiate an agreement in line with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

“Under international law, Australia is obliged to negotiate permanent maritime boundaries with Timor-Leste [East Timor] but it has refused to do so, despite all our invitations,” the tiny nation’s Prime Minister Rui Maria de Araujo said in a statement.

“This has left us with only one option,” he said, referring to the “compulsory conciliation proceedings” launched by his government earlier in the day under the Unclos.

East Timor believes that if its boundaries with Australia in the Timor Sea were decided under the 1982 convention, most of the rich oil and gas reserves in the sea would lie within its territory.

**Under international law, Australia is obliged to negotiate permanent maritime boundaries with Timor-Leste**

PRIME MINISTER RUI MARIA DE ARAUJO

“All Timor-Leste is seeking is a fair and equitable solution and importantly, what we are entitled to under international law,” Araujo said.

He called it “a matter of national priority ... as the final step in realising our sovereignty as an independent

state”.

In 2006, four years after East Timor gained its independence, the two countries signed a treaty on maritime arrangements in the Timor Sea.

Under that treaty, billions of dollars of revenue from the Greater Sunrise oil and gas fields would be split evenly between them, while establishment of permanent maritime boundaries would be deferred for 50 years.

East Timor, however, is currently disputing the treaty’s validity at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague after evidence surfaced that Australia had gained unfair advantage by bugging East Timor Cabinet meetings during the sensitive treaty negotiations.

Australian intelligence officials are also accused of seizing legal documents and data belonging to East Timor, including those relating to the espionage arbitration, from a lawyer for the tiny nation.

South China Morning Post